

THE SHARE CROPPERS VOICE

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF

THE SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS UNION

MEMPHIS, TENN. JULY 1935

VOL. I NO. 4

PER YEAR \$1.00

CALL FOR COUNTY UNION

HIGHER WAGES AND HONEST
ACCOUNTING DEMANDED
BY STFU LOCALS

The following seven points for immediate action have been proposed by the National Executive Council of the S.T.F.U.:

1st. That no one, Share Cropper or Laborer and his family, be without decent clothing, food, fuel and shelter.

2nd. That no Sharecropper hereafter shall be overcharged for furnished goods or cheated and out-figured out of his weights and earnings.

3rd. That killings of Share Croppers be stopped, and murderers arrested, tried and convicted; and for all killings the Sentence of Death.

4th. That no Share Cropper or his family have to die for want of medical attention.

5th. That wages for cotton-chopping be at the rate of 10¢ per hour; and for cotton picking, per hundred.

6th. That the planters and the authorities respect our constitutional rights to organize, free speech and assembly, and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances; and that all terror, brutality, and false imprisonment be stopped.

7th. And that hereafter the Planters recognize the Union and the right of "collective bargaining."

It is the intention of the STFU to build itself to such strength that all these demands may be won.

Every union man is urged to refuse to be led astray by persons who are trying to disrupt the Union. Such disruptors are agents of the planters.

POINSETT WILL BE FIRST TO
SET UP NEW STFU UNIT
IN ARKANSAS

Trumann, Ark., July 8, -A call for a meeting of delegates from all the locals of the STFU of POINSETT County was sent out to the locals this week. The meeting, to be held with the Southside Local on Sunday, July 21, is for the purpose of setting up a County Unit.

Delegates will be elected on the basis of dues paying members. Each local is entitled to one delegate, and large locals may elect one extra delegate for each 100 members in good standing.

At this meeting a County President, a County Secretary and other officers will be elected as well as a County Executive Council and a County Executive Committee and any other committees that may be necessary to the carrying on of the business of the County Union.

The County Union may make any by-laws for its guidance that do not conflict with the Constitution and Rules of the National Body.

If any local secretary in Poinsett County fails to receive formal notice of the meeting, he may take this announcement as authority for calling a special meeting if necessary for the election of delegates.

We hope that locals in other counties will get busy and plan for county set-ups as fast as possible. A State Convention will be called soon and, of course, you want your county represented.

Muskogee county, Oklahoma, has already set up a County Union with Bill Sellers, Keefeton, Okla., President, Gus McDaniels, Oktaha, Okla., Vice-President, and Sam Ferguson, Keefeton, Secretary-Treasurer.

July 1935

PERSONALS

Powers Hapgood has gone to New York. We hope that he may return by the end of the month.

Atley Delaney has gone back to Massachusetts.

Steve Gaugh is organizing around Little Rock, Ark.

Bob Reed is organizing in South Central Arkansas.

Odis L. Sweden is working in Okla. He is arranging for several county unions.

W.W. Lee has organized a new local at Trumann, Arkansas.

A new local has been organized at Madill, Okla.

#####

STFU WINS DECISION IN COURT
UNION SEAL RESTORED TO
NATIONAL OFFICE

Memphis, July 8,-The Circuit Court, Shelby County, Tenn., issued an order of dismissal in the case of W.H. Stultz against J.R. Butler and H.L. Mitchell when Mr. Stultz appeared in Court and stated that at the time he brought the suit he had done so unadvisedly and without authority and that he now did not wish to prosecute the case further.

This restored the seal and other property, that had been seized on a Writ of Replevin, to the National Office. This action of the Court should be sufficient notice to all persons who have tried to disrupt the union that their efforts will be fruitless.

#####

STANDARD OF LIVING OF FARM
LABORERS DECREASED

Farm laborers, according to official figures, got 37 million more in wages in 1934 than in 1933. But with the 12% increase in the cost of living in 1934, they needed an additional million dollars! That is, farm workers actually lowered their standard of living by over a million dollars while the AAA was boasting of its billion.

WAR CLOUDS GROW AS JAPAN
THREATENS RUSSIA; U.S.
CANT STAY OUT

Memphis, July 8,- It seems that war is breaking out all over the world. It is doubtful if the U.S. can stay out of it. Japan will attempt to take possession of the Pacific. She is already trying to bring about trouble with Russia in northern Asia. China will be drawn in. Germany is "rarin' to go." England has interests that are being threatened. France can't stay out.

The war lords are dancing with glee. Arms manufacturers will grow richer and richer off the taxes that will be paid by the laboring class.

The laborers build the war machinery and ammunition and then use it to kill other laborers of other countries who never did them any harm.

We were told that the World War was to make the world safe for Democracy, but instead it killed poor old Democracy deadlier than a door nail. It made physical and mental wrecks of millions of young men.

ALL AMERICAN WORKERS MUST OPPOSE WAR

The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, together with all other farm and labor organizations who realize how much American workers must lose in another war, will always oppose war. The policy of The Voice will be to discourage arms, armaments and war to the best of our ability.

#####

NOTICE TO READERS OF THE VOICE!

If you are not a subscriber to The Voice already, fill out the blank below and mail it to this office with \$1.00 and receive the paper regularly. If you get a club of four the price is only 50¢ per year.

-----GUT-HERE-----
Editor Share Croppers' Voice,
2527 Broad St., Memphis, Tenn.
Please send The Voice one year to

Name-----
P.O.-----
R.F.D.-----Box-----
Street Address-----
I enclose \$1.00.
-----GUT-HERE-----

STFU TO SET PRICE FOR COTTON PICKING BY MAJORITY VOTE OF THE MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union will set a price for cotton picking this fall. Now is the time for all union locals to begin thinking of the price which the union will demand.

In a few days a questionnaire will be sent out to every local to try to find what the members want and what plans they want to use for backing up the demands of the Union. Our plans will depend on what the majority says.

#####

ALABAMA TENANT FARMERS WILL CELEBRATE RALPH GRAY MEMORIAL DAY

Birmingham, Ala., July 8, -The Sharecroppers' Union of Alabama will celebrate July 17 in memory of Ralph Gray who was murdered by a mob of deputy sheriffs and riding bosses who raided a sharecroppers' meeting near Camp Hill, Alabama in 1931.

Ralph Gray was one of the first leaders and organizers of the Alabama Share Croppers' Union and will long be remembered as one who gave his life for the black and white sharecroppers and for the farmworkers of the South.

LONG LIVE HIS MEMORY!

#####

DR. CONNER FINDS NEW USE FOR SEAL

The following appeared in THE PRESS-SCIMITAR, July 8:

"..I see the big fight over the great seal of STFU has been settled. Judge Hammer has issued an order restoring the seal to the union...With that big problem out of the way, all the sharecroppers have to do is figure out some way to make a living. It would be fine if they could get to use
continued in next column

MORE PERSONALS

E.B. McKinney has returned from Mississippi. He says that the "harvest is ripe" for organization.

Ward Rogers has returned from St. Louis where he attended the NAACP Convention last week. He spoke before the Convention on the subject of "The Problems of The Tenant Farmers and the Work of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union."

Isabelle Carson has been commissioned to organize in the Arkansas River territory, west of Little Rock near Russellville, Arkansas.

We wish to thank all the persons who have written in to tell us of their loyalty to the Union. It is cooperation of this kind that keeps us determined to go on in the face of all opposition. Keep the good letters coming in. ...Editor.

#####

UNION NOTES

Convention of the Arkansas Federation of Labor will be held in Paris Arkansas, August 21-22. STFU may send delegates from the National Executive Council.

OLD AGE PENSIONS IN ARKANSAS

Applications for Old Age Pensions are now being taken in every county in Arkansas. To be eligible for a pension a person must be over 65 years old and must have resided in the state continuously for over 5 years. Two witnesses as to age, etc. must be with applicant when he applies. Union members who are eligible should apply at once and report any unfair discriminations by pension boards to your local committees and to the National Office.
their seal on a few just contracts, but if they cant, they can still get some satisfaction out of having it-maybe out of cracking pecans with it this fall."B.U.L.Conner.

ALABAMA SHARECROPPERS WIN
STRIKE FOR BETTER PAY
THRU UNION STRENGTH

Montgomery, Ala., - "\$1.00 a day, the main demand of the strike of cotton choppers, called by the Share Croppers' Union, has been won on a number of large plantations in Talapoosa, Lowndes and Montgomery counties, in the heart of the Alabama Black Belt," according to the report of the strike in the SOUTHERN WORKER, June, 1935.

In spite of organized lynch terror, the report continues, "more than 1000 white and Negro croppers refused to work at the 30¢ and 35¢ rates offered by the landlords for backbreaking toil from sun-up to sun-down. When terror methods failed, many landlords raised their rate to 50¢ and 75¢ a day, while some were forced to give one meal also."

The cotton farmers are not alone in this struggle in Alabama. "With white croppers joining the strike almost 100% in Talapoosa and parts of Montgomery and Lowndes county, milkers have won wage increases from \$2.50 to \$3.50 a week and many wage hands from \$12 to 26.50 per month. The strike is spreading to include wood cutters, oat cutters, dairy workers, etc."

#####

IMPROVED CONDITIONS RESULT FROM
ORGANIZATION OF CROPPERS

Our attention has been called to the fact that on a number of plantations near Marked Tree, Arkansas, repairs have been made on tenant houses, especially those along side the public highways. Several such houses on land belonging to Chapman-Dewey Lumber Co. are actually shingled with good heavy composition roofing shingles. Until the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union began organizing, the Arkansas planters rarely made any effort to repair a house, let alone making it fit for human beings to live in. Moral: JOIN THE UNION AND WE WILL MAKE THEM ALL PROVIDE HOUSES DECENT TO LIVE IN.

The prevailing rate of pay for cotton chopping and farm labor is 75¢ per day in most all of Arkansas, except
continued in next column

THE SHARECROPPERS' VOICE

Published by the Editorial Committee of the SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS' UNION.
2527 Broad Street, Memphis, Tennessee.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Per year.....\$1.00
6 Months......50
Clubs of 4 or more, each 50
Bundle orders 10 or more..01 each.

WE WANT better wages, better contracts, better prices, and better living conditions for laborers, sharecroppers, tenants and farmers in order that they (who produce all the wealth of the world) may have better living conditions, a fuller life and assurance that their children may be allowed to live.

When a man (or a class of men) is allowed to use and control a thing, he soon comes to feel that he owns it and whether or not it is rightfully his, he becomes very angry if an attempt is made to deprive him of its use.

The large landowners, as a class, have been accustomed to use the labor of the poor to enrich themselves and we should not be surprised when they do all in their power to break down the Union because they know that if the workers join together they can no longer exploit them as freely as when each stood alone.

IN UNION THERE IS STRENGTH! Band together in a brotherhood! Each working for the good of all we can obtain justice. We can improve our conditions and raise our standard of living.

JOIN THE STFU!

Poinsett, Cross, Mississippi and part of Crittendon Counties. Where the Union is organized strongly, the rate is invariably \$1.00 per day. There is another gain that can be credited only to the activity of the STFU. Do you believe that Arkansas Planters voluntarily pay 25¢ more for a days work than others of their tribe do? Not much they dont! Some of them would have men working for 15¢ per day if they could get away with it. They are afraid of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union,
continued on page 6

SECRETARY'S REPORT

SOLUTION OF SHARECROPPERS PROBLEMS
NOT FOUND IN NEW BANKHEAD BILL

Total membership regularly enrolled 11,700

This does not include the American Farm and Farm-Laborers' Union which recently joined the STFU en masse. This membership is reported at 3,300.

COUNCILS

Arkansas-Missouri District(Reporting)	62
Oklahoma-Texas District(Reporting)	55
Total	117

RECEIPTS

Dues payments-national, state, county and local, from Sept 1, 1934-July 1, 1935	\$970.08.
Retained in locals	268.25
Paid to National Office	\$701.83.

Average monthly receipts, National Office	\$70.18
State, County and Local Office	26.82
Total Average Monthly	\$97.00

Contributions from union members were accounted for, National Convention held February 2, 1935. All other contributions accounted for to the committees in charge of defense, relief, etc.

EXPENDITURES

Legal fees-Norcrosse Case-authorized by Convention	\$250.00
Defense and Relief-Mills, Stultz, Rogers cases	26.00
Total	\$276.00
Expenses of organizers(gas, oil, etc.)	243.25
Paper, postage, etc., to Dec. 31, 1934	120.60
Office expenses to July 1, 1935	61.98
Total	\$701.83

The above statement includes the one accepted by the National Convention on February 2, 1935.

Contributions for the defense of Ward Rogers and others are accounted for to the committees raising the funds.

Relief in the form of clothing, cash or food was distributed by church and labor organizations through their own representatives. The Union, as such, did not and will not accept responsibility. Each individual distributor used his or her own judgment as to the merits of the cases under consideration.

No salaries have ever been paid to any official of the Union.

A year ago, Senator Bankhead of Alabama sponsored his famous bill making the reduction of cotton acreage compulsory, thereby furnishing the landowners with a means to reduce the number of tenant farmers and sharecroppers dependent upon them, at the same time providing them assurance of higher profits on the smaller amount of cotton produced. Thanks to the organized protest of the tenant farmers, the injustice and destructiveness of this act have not passed unnoticed.

Mr. Bankhead recognizes the threat to the whole AAA program in an organization of militant sharecroppers who are refusing to be sacrificed to any program. This year, therefore, he has sponsored another bill in Congress providing for the creation of a Farmer's Home Corporation which shall make loans of a billion dollars to farm tenants, sharecroppers, and farm laborers, in order to help them establish farms and farm houses, at a rate of interest not to exceed 3½%. 60 years at the most is allowed for paying off the indebtedness.

Taken at face value, this bill may seem very liberal, but further consideration shows many shortcomings:

First-loans must be limited to an amount which will provide a farm no larger than the average farm in the state, thus excluding the possibility of any large-scale cooperative enterprises.

Second-no property can be bought without appraisal by "competent experts", there by involving the whole transaction in red tape machinery and forcing the borrower to surrender his independence of choice completely to the government.

Third-an applicant for a loan must prove that the income which he gets from any property already owned is insufficient to live on-a vague requirement which may easily be used as a means of discrimination.

Fourth-in all cases the Corporation must take care to avoid the expansion of production so that the artificial price set by the AAA may not be endangered, thereby proving that the object of the Bill is not really to assist the sharecroppers to a higher standard of living, or in the vital task of producing cotton

continued on page 6

STFU GROWS IN TEXAS AND OKLAHOMA

37 new Locals of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union have recently come in out in Oklahoma with a membership of approximately 3300. Down in the Red River Valley in Texas a number of Organizations are being formed and we hope to put out full force of organizers in the field before August 1st. A goal of 50,000 new union members has been set for Texas and Oklahoma and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union will soon be the strongest farm organization in all America.

#####

IMPROVED CONDITIONS...

continued from page 4.

and hand out a few crumbs in hope that you wont ask for more pay. A questionnaire is being sent out from the National Office in regard to the price we will demand for cotton picking. In replying to this, try to agree upon a fair and reasonable price and get ready to back it up by Strike Action this fall, when picking gets in full swing. Thousands of cotton pickers will join you in your demands and all over the South the price will be raised.

#####

STFU DELEGATE ATTENDS DETROIT
YOUTH CONFERENCE

Ray Chaplin, the STFU delegate to the "Youth Conference" at Detroit arrived there by way of a freight train in time to speak.

He writes that he will speak there Wednesday and Sunday, July 14, and says, "Send me 20 copies of THE VOICE. I know that I can get plenty of subs up here."

R,ghto, Ray! Here comes THE VOICE.
Send the Subs! Editor.

#####

The ARKANSAS SOCIALIST PARTY will meet in their annual convention at Little Rock, August 17-18. At this Convention one entire session will be given over to the discussion of the problems of the sharecroppers and the work of the STFU, in line with the interest shown by the Socialists all over the country in the sharecroppers' struggle. All persons interested in improving the condition of the farmer and the worker are invited.

BANKHEAD BILL....

continued from page 5

to make the clothes most workers need so badly, but to throw a sop to the sharecroppers to keep them quiet while the planters continue to reap their profits.

In a recent edition of the SOCIALIST CALL, Norman Thomas points out omissions in this Bill which further reduce its usefulness to tenant farmers:

There is no guarantee of equality of treatment for negroes.

No means is provided for setting the maximum price to be paid for farms purchased through government loans to the earning power of the land purchased.

In short, Mr. Thomas points out, "There is no assurance that the difference between the rate at which tenants can borrow money from the Government and from private interests will guarantee their success in farming....In cotton production what we need is the encouragement of cooperatives or well-run collectives on a large scale. At most what should be given tenants is a secure lease with Government help rather than a title which they will struggle to buy unsuccessfully."

The Bankhead Bill has not yet passed Congress. The politicians of vested interests fight even these minimum concessions, but even if it does become law, sharecroppers must realize that it will be no solution to their problems. A change in creditor does not make a debtor independent. There's only one way of winning true independence: continual organized pressure through your union strength.

#####

NOTICE TO STFU WOMENS' LOCALS

All womens' locals, already chartered should remember to report regularly to the County Secretary, STFU, or to the National Office (if county is not organized). They should also start making plans for definite work such as starting canning clubs in cooperation with County Home Demonstration agents, or organizing night schools for adults during the winter.

Where locals are not yet organized, application for charters should be sent to the National Office. Women pay no dues.

MORE ABOUT WOMENS LOCALS NEXT ISSUE!